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Social interaction theory

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Bellair, P. E., Argyle, M., & Dean, J. (1965). Eye contact, distance, and affiliation studied in two different contexts. Sociometry, 28(2), 289–304. Bott, E., Forrest, R., & Kearns, A. (2001). Community, social capital, and the importance of neighbour networks in preventing community crime. Journal of Community Psychology, 32(1), 9–25. Farrell, S., Aubry, T., & Coulombe, D. (2004). The role of neighborhoods and neighbors in promoting well-being. Urban Studies, 38(2), 2125–2143. Goffman, E., Foster, J., & Granovetter, M. S. (1968). Interaction order and its influence on behavior. American Journal of Sociology, 73(6), 1294–1317. Hunt, A. & Goldschmidt, W. (1972). Social relationships in a residential area: An ethnographic study. Urban Studies, 9(2), 149–162. Research on social interactions and community ties has been ongoing since the early 20th century. Studies have explored how environmental factors like furniture arrangement, props, and personality influence social behavior (Mehrabia & Diamond, 1971). Additionally, research has focused on strategies for managing disputes in neighborhoods (Merry, 1979) and examining the impact of community ties on social interaction (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981). The collapse and revival of American community have also been studied, with some arguing that close-knit communities, local shops, and public transport are beneficial for residents (Sherlock, 1991). Other research has looked at the role of social interaction and support in shaping individual well-being (Shinn et al., 1984). More recent studies have investigated how personality traits affect social relationships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998) and how community cohesion and material deprivation impact neighborhood environments (Stafford et al., 2003). Furthermore, research has aimed to develop unified frameworks for understanding the dynamic interplay of personality and social relationships (Back et al., 2011). F., Pavot, W. (1993), Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Extraversion & neuroticism as predictors of objective life events: A longitudinal analysis. McCrae, R.R., Sutin, A.R. (2009), Handbook of individual differences in social behavior. Openness to experience. Mehl, M.R., Gosling, S.D., Pennebaker, J.W. (2006), Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Manifestations & implicit folk theories of personality in daily life. Mehl, M.R., Robbins, M.L., große Deters, F. (2012), Psychosomatic Medicine. Naturalistic observation of health relevant social processes: The electronically activated recorder (EAR) methodology in psychosomatics. Pianesi, F., Mana, N., Cappelletti, A., Lepri, B., Zancanaro, M. (2008), Multimodal recognition of personality traits in social interactions. Reis, H.T., Wheeler, L. (1991), Advances in Experimental Social Psychology. Studying social interaction with the Rochester Interaction Record. Social Interaction Theory: This theory explains how people behave differently when they're around others than they usually do. It was developed by Robert Freed Bales at Harvard University's Social Relations department. The theory covers various aspects, including SYMLOG, interaction process analysis, and the Three Dimensional Space of Interpersonal Personality Model. It also discusses different roles in social interactions and their impact on personalities. A groundbreaking approach to studying group dynamics was developed by Robert Bales, focusing on social interaction processes and value analysis. This personal approach transcended traditional experimental methods, enabling a deeper understanding of human interaction. To achieve this, Bales created the Systematic Multiple Level Observation of Groups (SYMLOG) consultancy group, which allowed for in-depth exploration of connections between human interactions. During his research, Bales established fundamental boundaries and criteria for leader and follower behavior, ultimately leading to the development of a new field theory. This reevaluation aimed to comprehend diverse contexts, rather than emphasizing differences. The mental processes of individuals and social interaction were seen as taking place within measurable systematic contexts, enabling more accurate explanations and predictions. Symbolic Interactionism Theory, associated with George Herbert Mead, focuses on micro-level interactions between people in societies. While sharing similarities with Social Interaction Theory, it also exhibits distinct differences. Interaction Process Analysis is a term that encompasses various methods developed over the past twenty years, all based on first-hand observations of social interaction in small groups. Bales' own Interaction Process Analysis involved an observer recording group members' actions and reactions in one of twelve categories: showing solidarity, decreasing tension, or demonstrating agreement. Demonstrates agreement and acceptance, respects rules. Offers solutions The individual shows self-direction by giving directions to others, indicating independence from others and autonomy. Expresses opinion The person shares their viewpoint, provides analysis, and conveys feelings or expectations. Provides guidance The individual offers information, repeats important points, and confirms or clarifies when desired. Requests guidance The person asks for advice, alternative solutions, or confirmation when needed. Agrees or disagrees Shows approval or disapproval by accepting or rejecting suggestions. Displays conflict The person requests help, shows tension, or becomes defensive. Disagrees Shows antagonism by belittling others' status and defending their own. The Three Dimensional Space of Interpersonal Personality Model was developed to define a person's value and meaning within a group. This model helps describe the Social Interaction Theory by categorizing roles based on how others perceive and evaluate them. These evaluations are linked to behavior or position, and answers to questions like "Does this person make others laugh?" or "Do they seem confident in themselves?" provide insight into their personality. The concept of someone's personality is often misunderstood as being a fixed trait. However, it is crucial to distinguish between permanent personal traits and those that are displayed only in specific group roles. To truly understand an individual within a team, one must observe the entire group dynamic and note how other members perceive them. A key framework for understanding interpersonal dynamics is the SYMLOG model, which categorizes individuals into six main roles: Dominant, Controlled, Friendly, Submissive, Emotionally Expressive, and Unfriendly. These roles are further broken down into associated qualities, such as Assertive, Extravert, Authoritative, and Task Leader. Moreover, personality types within groups can be identified through the combination of these roles and characteristics. For instance, Type U denotes an assertive, talkative individual on a path to success and power; Type UPF is someone who is socially outgoing, friendly, and task-oriented, leading towards solidarity and progress. The connections between group dynamics and personality theories are deeply intertwined. Individuals within groups take on different roles that influence how they interact with others. By understanding these complexities, one can better grasp the nuances of human behavior in social settings. People take on different roles in their daily lives, often without even realizing it, leading to effortless social interaction. These roles are deeply ingrained in our society and rely heavily on background assumptions about what is expected of us in various contexts. However, when these expectations are violated, the social order can become disrupted. Social Interaction Theory suggests that people construct their own reality through interactions with others. This theory was developed by sociologist Garfinkel, who demonstrated that even small actions, like behaving like a stranger at home, can significantly impact how we see ourselves and our place in society. Furthermore, taking on different roles not only contributes to the social order but also influences personality development. By assuming new roles, people's expectations change, leading to altered interactions with others and, consequently, changes in how they perceive themselves. Kirkham's Transformation Through Experience A police officer once transformed from a professor into one through his experience with the law. Retrieved from Toolshero, a webpage dedicated to sociology and social interaction theory. The original publication date is December 26th, 2020, with the most recent update being August 8th, 2024. Visit Toolshero's page on Social Interaction Theory (Bales) at to learn more about this topic.